

Reports from the 2017 SPHS Fieldwork Bursary Holders

Alexia Miltiadous Johansson (University of Liverpool)

The awarded BSA fieldwork bursary (200£) covered most of the cost for my airfare from the UK (London) to Greece (Thessaloniki) and made it possible for me to participate in the Olynthos project for a third season for two weeks in July 2017.

Introduction

In my doctoral research project in Mediterranean Archaeology at Cardiff University, I investigate Greco-Roman domestic architecture and daily life at different settlements in Cyprus and Crete. I have during July/August 2015 (five weeks), July 2016 (two weeks), and July 2017 (two weeks) participated in an archaeological project in northern Greece that investigates a Classical settlement with preserved domestic architecture. Early investigations of the settlement produced a large amount of valuable information about the topography and residences within the settlement. The site is unique as it provides our best source of information about Classical houses and daily life in ancient Greece, as previous excavations revealed c. 100 houses.

Results and experience gained

My role within the Olynthos project has been the processing of finds including the sorting and classifying of Classical pottery. I also participated for one week in the excavation of houses and spent a day with the field survey team investigating the topography of the area, which aims to establish the outer boundaries of the settlement. Moreover, during the 2017 season, I was given the opportunity to take on responsibility for pottery demonstration sessions for interested team members who wanted to learn more about the pottery that was being excavated at the settlement, a task that I deeply enjoyed.

The knowledge gained so far by participating in the Olynthos project has been both relevant and extremely important for the progress of my own research. I have gained additional practical training as an archaeologist focused on domestic contexts. I have also obtained broader knowledge about house types, their development within different chronological periods and geographical areas and about the nature of a typical Classical pottery assemblage from houses in this region in mainland Greece. In the 2017 season, I furthermore got the opportunity to improve my teaching skills by conducting practical pottery demonstration sessions at the site for interested team members.

Ellis Cuffe (University of Liverpool)

I was very fortunate to be awarded the British Schools at Athens' Fieldwork Bursary. I used the bursary in order to fund my participation in the Olynthos Archaeological Field Project (OAFP) from the 3rd – 29th July 2017.

The first of many highlights from my time participating in the OAFP was that I was really able to learn and embed a number of professional archaeological processes and procedures. These included proper excavation and sampling methodology, such as when sampling charcoal and phytolith remains, as well as samples from potential floor contexts from within Classical domestic spaces. What is more, as a returning volunteer, I was allowed more freedom and responsibility to take on some supervisory roles, for example proper recording methods, trench diaries, context sheets, photography and the presentation of brief trench summaries to the rest of the OAFP team. In addition, I was able to work on other technical

skills, such as planning and sections drawings, which not only improved on my initially lack lustre drawing skills but gave me confidence that I am actually capable of working within a professional archaeological environment.

Secondly, my time in Greece allowed me to visit a number of sites and museums in the vicinity of Olynthos, namely those in Pella and Thessaloniki. These gave me a far wider perspective on the history and archaeology of northern Greece. The visit to the Byzantine Museum has caused me to entirely change the focus of my future academic career. Where once I was interested in Classical material, I am now enthralled with that of late antiquity and medieval Greece and, upon completion of my MA, intend to enrol on courses related to these periods.

My proposed MA dissertation will investigate inter-group social relations in the ancient world, specifically those that occur within Classical urban environments in the eastern Mediterranean. The aims of the OAFP therefore aligned well with my current research interests. The opportunity to gain a grasp of the primary archaeological material and to be taught identification skills by experts is of fundamental importance to my research.

Thirdly, with the OAFP being an international project I had the opportunity to meet and engage with such an enormous variety of professionals, as well as other postgraduate students from across the UK, Europe and the USA. Meeting other students was especially productive as I not only made numerous friends but was able to exchange ideas on topics I had never considered before and also was able to reflect on my own university experience.

In conclusion, my participation has helped me to contextualise and understand the urban environment of Olynthos, as well as improve my practical archaeological fieldwork skills and techniques. I hope to return to Olynthos next year, gain further supervisory experience, improve my knowledge of primary archaeological material and continue on towards the next steps in my development as an academic within the field of Classical archaeology.